



National Guard CERFP Teams

What is it? Chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and high yield explosive (CBRNE) enhanced response force packages (CERFP) teams consist of approximately 186 Soldiers and Airmen. Each team has a command and control section, a decontamination element, a medical element, a casualty search and extraction element, and a fatalities search and recovery element.

Seventeen states have CERFP teams: California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, Washington, and West Virginia. The CERFP teams are strategically based with at least one CERFP team in each of the 10 Federal Emergency Management Agency regions.

Three CERFP teams are in Region 3 (PA, WV, VA) and three more in Region 5 (IL, OH, MN) providing coverage for high population areas in the North/North-East and National Capital Region. Two CERFP teams are in Region 9 (HI, CA) based on population density and geographic location. Two CERFP teams are in Region 4 (GA, FL) and two more in Region 7 (NE, MO) supporting the South East population density and providing capabilities to leverage in the event of a catastrophe such as Katrina or Deepwater Horizon.

The existing National Guard CERFP teams, also ensure that governors and adjutants general have the capabilities in each state to mitigate risks associated with collapsed structure (confined space) rescue, medical triage and stabilization, mass decontamination, and the recovery of fatalities resulting from a CBRNE incident.


What do they do and what have they done? The CERFP teams function as either follow-on or pre-positioned forces working closely with deployed weapons of mass destruction civil support teams (WMD-CSTs) to provide a robust National Guard response capability. The CERFP teams are specially trained to integrate into the National Incident Command System to conduct life saving actions within a contaminated environment.

The CERFP teams and WMD-CSTs provide a phased capability; WMD-CSTs detect and identify CBRNE agents/substances, assess the effects and advise the local authorities on managing the effects of the attack. The WMD-CSTs also assist with requests for other forces. The CERFP teams locate and extract victims from a contaminated environment, perform mass patient/casualty decontamination, and provide treatment as necessary to stabilize patients for evacuation. The teams are specially trained to respond to a weapons-of-mass-destruction incident. The WMD-CSTs are dedicated units of National Guard personnel on active duty, whereas, the CERFPs are comprised of existing National Guard units in traditional reserve status. They can be mobilized in state active duty, Title 32, or Title 10 status. Each CERFP can be ready to deploy to an incident site within six hours of notification of a CBRNE or WMD incident.

The search and extraction function is assigned to an Army or Air National Guard Engineering unit; the decontamination element is from an Army National Guard Chemical Company; the medical element is from an Air National Guard Medical Group. These organizations maintain their original mission but are given additional training and equipment to build on existing skills for accomplishing the CERFP mission.

In addition to their normal military equipment, CERFP teams are issued state-of-the-art specialized commercial equipment that meets the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards.

What continued efforts does the National Guard have planned for the future? The on-going CERFP program of preparedness requires that each team maintain current OSHA and National Fire Protection Association certifications, and a monthly readiness level required for a quick and effective response to any catastrophic event. The National Guard will continue to institutionalize the CERFP within standard



Department of Defense (DOD) processes – for example, integrating the CERFP into the standardization, evaluation, and assistance team (SEAT) program. The SEAT will conduct field evaluations of the 17 CERFP, which will provide program oversight to ensure compliance with laws and policies and audit the disposition of allocated resources. In addition, the NGB, in coordination with the Maneuver Support Center (Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri), is developing written doctrine for the CERFP. The first and second draft have been completed; we expect doctrine for CERFP to be published by Fort Leonard Wood by August 2011. Fatality search and recovery teams, a new element of the CERFP, conduct search and recovery of fatalities from a CBRNE contaminated environment in support of the CERFP team commander's mission. This capability has been integrated into the CERFP concept of operations and will be included in CERFP doctrine.

Why is this important to the Nation? The CERFP teams are a key element of the DOD's overall program to provide military support to civil authorities in the event of an intentional or accidental incident involving CBRNE or WMD on or in the United States. Within the national response continuum; CERFP teams are designed to fill the 6- to 72-hour gap in our nation's ability to provide mass casualty patient decontamination, medical triage, and treatment and the extraction of injured or deceased from a contaminated environment. The CERFP program will continue to be the lead in providing a life saving capability for DOD's response to a CBRNE incident.